

# Substance Abuse Relapse Prevention Journal Prompts

## The Power of Journaling

Journaling has been used as a tool for mental healing for many years. Writing helps us to manage our stress, increases our communication and our emotional intelligence. It is a great coping mechanism for anxiety or depression while also being a tool to help you achieve your goals. We recommend that any individual, even if they are not in active addiction or recovery, consider keeping a journal of thoughts or to write actively as a form of meditation.

## How We Encourage Journaling

At Royal Life Centers, our guests are encouraged to keep a journal and actively write in it during their recovery. We believe that emotional recovery is as important as physical wellness. Through a combination of group therapy, one-on-one counseling and journaling, you can explore the emotions you may not have known you had. It may also be difficult for you to express yourself verbally in regards to some of these feelings.

## Journal Prompts and Ideas

The following are just some of the thousands of ideas for journal topics. You may think of many more, and we encourage you to share them with us so that we can update our list or help our guests even further. Let us know if you can think of some new prompts!

### Prompts to Write about the Past

It can be difficult to explore your past. In reality, it may be one of the most painful areas of your life. However, exploring these memories and finding peace with them is truly a way to expedite your recovery. Many of us struggle with addiction or substance abuse because of a traumatic event in our past. Its important to not hate who you were, or where you came from, but to appreciate who it made you today. Stay positive, and write from your heart.

1. Write a Letter to Yourself as a Child: What are some things you wish you could tell yourself as a child? And this does not have to be strictly focused on your addiction or recovery. While you may want to remind your young self to say no when a friend offers you that first dose, you can also tell yourself dont be afraid to ask out that girl you like, or try out for the baseball team. Whenever I write this prompt, my first few suggestions are: Dont drink soda. You really love onions, despite what your mom tells you. Go to culinary school!.

2. Write a Letter to Loved Ones: In all likelihood, this will be a very hard journal prompt, but very important. It is possible that during active addiction, friends or loved ones were pushed away or relationships were broken due to the disease of substance abuse. If you went or are going through the 12 Step Program, then you will know that Step 8 talks about making a list of people that were harmed, and being willing to make amends. This prompt can help you to

identify those people, how they were wronged and how you would make amends.

3. Write About Your Happiest Sober Memory: Before you started using, what is a memory you can think of that made you most happy? Was it a sweet family moment or vacation? A Christmas morning, or a first kiss? What made this moment so special? Can you recreate it, or work toward a new memory that is similar? As you reminisce about the past, remember that the future is still ahead and you can build memories to last a lifetime.

4. Write a Letter to Your Addicted Self: Address your self, when you were at your worst. What words did you need to hear that no one said? What would've made you go into recovery faster? This is a way to help you deal with any guilts or self-deprecation that you may feel on account of your addiction. Try not to be too hard on yourself!

5. Write about Your First Experience with Substance Abuse: Can you identify the first time you tried drugs or alcohol? What led you to the decision or what you could have done differently to prevent taking that first hit? While it's not good to dwell on your choices, maybe by identifying what brought you to them, you can learn how to avoid the situation from happening again.

#### Prompts to Write about the Future

Now that you are in recovery, your future is bright and filled with hope. The road ahead is whatever you want to make it. By staying strong, staying healthy and maintaining a positive life you can truly start fresh. While you journal, think about the future and what you want to do to appreciate your life. Here are some ideas.

1. List Places You'd Like to Visit: Some people are fortunate enough to see the world, and some of us never got the chance. There is no denying that travel can transform a person. Seeing life outside of our little fish bowls can change perspective completely. What are five countries, or cities you want to see? Do you dream of the beaches of Thailand, or the Eiffel Tower? Keep a list of what you want to see, and then come up with a plan on how to make it a reality. Put it out there and work toward your goal!

2. Make a List of Goals: Somewhat different from above, these can be short or long term goals that you may not have been able to achieve or work at while you were struggling with your addiction. They can be simple, like learning new recipes, picking up an instrument, reading more books or finding a great job. Just like the places you want to visit, coming up with goals and accomplishments will give you something to focus your energy on. By keeping these goals very positive, you have reinforcement that your decision to become sober was the right one.

3. Talk about your Dream Job: Now that you are out of the fog and beginning a clean life, what are some jobs that you would love? Do you need to go back to school in order to obtain them? Are they realistic? For fun, write about an unrealistic job and then a more obtainable

one. List out the qualifications you need for each. Maybe the pipe dream is more real than you thought

4. Names for Children: Have you considered that now that you are in recovery and sober, that perhaps you'd like to start a family? What would you like to name your future children and why? What does each name mean to you? If you already have children, or do not wish to have any, take it a different direction and think of some fun names for a future dog or cat.

5. Write a Letter to Your Future Self: What do you want to ask your future self? Do you wish to know the secret to your own success? Think about the questions that you desperately want answers to and use that to inspire you to get the answers you seek. Once again, you can have fun with it and be a little silly, or you can take this seriously. Take whichever route will give you the most benefits.

### Prompts to Write about Recovery

The time you will or did spend in substance abuse treatment is one that will impact you for the rest of your life. This is your opportunity to grow, to learn and to evolve into a healthier you. It is very important to remember what you have gathered during this time and to keep track of how it made you feel. Once you are on your own and living your life, being able to look back on these memories can bring you strength.

1. What Did You Learn About Yourself in Treatment?: Like all of our recommendations, this should be kept fairly light-hearted. What sort of things did you learn about yourself while in treatment? If you participated in music therapy, maybe it was that you love to write music, or that you are naturally gifted with an instrument. Perhaps you realized that you have a natural bond with animals if you did animal or equine therapy. Did adventure therapy unlock your love of nature or hiking? Now that you know these things about yourself, how will you further explore it?

2. What Would You Tell a Loved One Who is About to Start Treatment?: If a friend or family member was about to begin substance abuse treatment, what would you tell them? What would you recommend? Did you make mistakes that you'd like to warn them against? Did you find a particularly life-changing group or activity that you want them to also get involved with?

3. If You Were not in Recovery What Would Your Life Be Like Today?: If you had not made the choice to go into recovery, where would your life be today? What do you think that you'd be doing? Who would you be with? Where would you be living?

4. Describe Your Biggest Recovery Hurdle: This is for you to have an outlet about what your biggest challenges have been since getting sober. By understanding what was most difficult, you can work with your therapist or group to overcome that hurdle if it appears again.

5. What do you Want to Share with Your Counselor?: Keep tabs on the things you want to

discuss at your next group session or with your therapist. If you are recently in recovery, your memory may still be foggy. Keep a journal of the items you wish to bring up, so you don't forget!

## Prompts to Write about Yourself

Journaling prompts about yourself help you to dive deep into who you are. They allow you to explore what makes you, you. You can use these as a form of positive reinforcement - keep it positive! Try to remember that your goal is to express yourself and have a personalized outlet. Above all else, try to have some fun with them.

1. **The Story of Your Life:** If you were to write a book about your life story, what would the title be? Be creative, list multiple! If you were making a movie, who would you want to play you as the starring role? What would the soundtrack be? Think about the main points and key events that your story would show or tell - which song would fit each of those moments and why did you choose the ones that you did? By understanding the music you associate with each memory, you can realize your feelings about those moments and work through the bad and celebrate the good!

2. **Thank Your Support:** Since you are the main character in your story, who would be the supporting cast? You should take this journal prompt as an opportunity to thank the support people in your life who helped you get this far. List them off and what you want to say to each of them. This may give you the courage to tell them in person.

3. **Write About Your Current Feelings:** How are you doing now? Let's talk about what you are experiencing. Some things you can discuss is how your body is feeling overall, how your mind is doing and how you are tending to your spirit. By listing out your feelings you can see how you have improved, day over day. Talk about the good days and the bad.

4. **What I Want My Loved Ones to Know About Me:** Is there something that you wish you could tell your friends or family, that you still hold back? Get those feelings out on paper. Even if you don't share it vocally, letting it out would be the best way to relieve yourself of the tension.

5. **What are you Most Grateful For?:** Since you have become sober, what are you most grateful for? What aspects of your new life are you happy about? What have you fixed or rekindled from your old life that you are most excited about? Meditate on these items so you can remember what you fight for!

## Reach Out

If you or a loved one has a dependency or addiction and is in need of substance abuse treatment, please reach out to us about your detox and treatment options. Royal Life Centers admissions staff is available 24/7 to answer your questions and address your concerns. We can be reached at (877)-RECOVERY or 877-732-6837. Because We Care.